

DEED / VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES
VRS COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2014—9:00 AM—3:00 PM
VRS WOODBURY OFFICE / HUDSON CONFERENCE ROOM

SESSION NOTES:

Committee Objective

The purpose of the VRS Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee is to provide strategic advice and consultation to DEED/VRS on topics and issues affecting the mutual provision of DEED/VRS and CRP/LUV services to Minnesotans with disabilities. Our efforts to understand issues and to work collaboratively will build and nurture the capacity of Minnesota's rehabilitation community to advance the employment, independent living and community integration of Minnesotans with disabilities.

Specifically, the VRS Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee will:

- Represent the perspectives and interests of CRP/LUVs in advancing rehabilitation and employment issues while fostering dialogue and engagement on critical issues throughout the greater rehabilitation community
- Promote innovative service practices to accelerate the adoption of best practices at a systems level that fosters equitable access to quality services on a statewide basis
- Provide strategic level advice and consultation to DEED/VRS on matters affecting CRP/LUVs
- Identify key topics and issues affecting CRP/LUVs and DEED/VRS
- Consider input from subject matter experts in issues affecting economic development, state demographics / population trends, and promising practices
- Engage in active reflection, spirited discussion and strategic dialogue on critical topics affecting CRP/LUVs and DEED/VRS services to persons with disabilities in Minnesota
- Provide a forum for the review and discussion of critical VRS and CRP service delivery topics including, but not limited to: current service delivery practices; new and emerging service needs; identifying best practices; and the consideration of statewide service needs and resources

2014 Community Partner Members (listed alphabetically): Becky Bazzarre, Laura Bealey, Gil Bessard, Steve Brink, Heather Deutschlaender, Jeremy Gurney, Josh Howie, Amanda Jensen-Stahl, Dan Meyers, Julie Peterschick, Rachel Praught, and Robert Reedy

VRS Members: Jay Hancock, Becky Johnson, Lori Thorpe, and Kris Tone

Sponsor: Kim Peck, VRS Director

Co-leaders: Chris McVey and Jan Thompson

Facilitator: Holly Johnson

2014 Schedule: Jan 24, Mar 28, Apr 25, Jun 27, Sep 26, Oct 24, and Dec 5.

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December 5, 2014 Session Objectives:

- * Provide a conduit for sharing relevant, important and timely updates and information for the benefit of the vocational rehabilitation community and consumers including:
 - o an update on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
- * Recognition of outgoing advisory committee members and announcement of 2015 committee membership
- * Engage committee members in a thoughtful review of the VRS CRP Advisory Committee fourth year's experience, results and observations in 2014
- * Facilitate advisory dialogue on the committee's role in community building for a stronger vocational rehabilitation system across Minnesota
- * Develop potential topics for committee consideration in 2015

December 5 2014 Attendees (*listed alphabetically*): Becky Bazzarre, Laura Bealey, Gil Bessard, Heather Deutschlaender, Tyler Foutch (for Rachel Praught), Jeremy Gurney, Jay Hancock, Josh Howie, Amanda Jensen-Stahl, Becky Johnson, Dan Meyers, Chris McVey, Kim Peck, Julie Peterschick, Robert Reedy, Jan Thompson, Lori Thorpe, and Kris Tone

Not in attendance: Steve Brink

Facilitator: Holly Johnson

Agenda Topics:

1. Welcome / Overview
2. CRP Advisory Committee Transitions
3. Strategic Update: WIOA Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act
4. Working Lunch: WIOA Update Q&A / Discussion
5. VR Community Success Story *December Storyteller - Tyler Foutch*
6. VRS CRP Advisory Committee: 2014 in Review
7. VRS CRP Advisory Committee: Building the Greater VR Community in 2015
8. Vocational Rehabilitation Community Updates
9. Wrap Up/Adjourn @ 3pm

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Meeting Highlights:

- The committee discussed the content and implications of significant legal decisions and regulations related to Employment Services and Vocational Rehabilitation including WIOA and the Olmstead Decision/Minnesota Plan.
- The committee reviewed the accomplishments of 2014 work together and discussed ideas for building upon the advisory's work in 2015.

Next Steps:

- **DOCUMENT SESSION NOTES:** Documentation and communication of session notes for key audiences including committee, VRS, and CRP/LUV partners.
- **NEW MEMBER INFO:** As part of the welcome process, new members will be pointed to the DEED/VRS website for access to the previous years' committee meeting summaries as background information.
- **WIOA PRESENTATION TO CRP ADVISORY:** Kim Peck will send the presentation slides she reviewed as part of the strategic update on WIOA out to the advisory committee.
- **WIOA FAQ ASSIGNMENT:** The CRP Advisory Committee recommends assigning VRS Director of Public Affairs John Fisher and the Community Outreach Team to draft a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) reference document as it relates to WIOA and/or Olmstead for the benefit of the greater Vocational Rehabilitation community's understanding and compliance with the new legislation.
- **POTENTIAL CRP INPUT ON WIOA RULEMAKING:** The committee discussed creating a collaborative impact statement outlining reactions and points of agreement regarding any concerns with the WIOA rules. Given that the proposed rules are not anticipated until end of January at the earliest, the committee agreed to revisit this idea at the February 27th meeting of the CRP Advisory Committee.
- **CRP ADVISORY COMMITTEE 2014 YEAR IN REVIEW:** Holly Johnson will send out the summary of 2014 committee work out to all committee members.
- **NEXT MEETING:** Initial 2015 meeting will be on Friday, February 27th.

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Welcome and Opening

The committee opened with a welcome by co-leads Chris McVey and Jan Thompson.

CRP Advisory Committee Transitions

Chris and Jan acknowledged the many important and positive contributions of the retiring advisory committee members. Jan quoted key words and phrases from the definition of community that resonated with the work of the advisory: 'a unified body of individuals', 'common interests', and 'shared characteristics'. She noted that another phrase 'linked by common policy' can be applied as well and in the advisory committee's situation it can be applied to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Recognition of outgoing charter members was conveyed to CRP members Becky Bazarre, Laura Bealey, Gil Bessard, and Steve Brink and to VRS members Becky Johnson and Kris Tone.

Next, Chris and Jan announced that from ~ 20 applications, the following four new 2015-2017 CRP members have been selected to serve the standard three-year term:

- Wendy DeVore, Career Ventures, will be representing the Metro region as well as providing a deaf and hard of hearing perspective on the advisory
- Kelly Dilger, Options, will be representing the Northern region as well as providing a Limited Use Vendor (LUV) perspective on the advisory
- Nick Monson, Functional Industries, will be representing the South and Central region.
- Lynn Vincent, Courage Kenny, will be the second Metro region representative on the advisory
- Lori Thorpe will serve as the VRS RAM representative on the advisory
- Jay Hancock will serve as the VRS Regional Manager representative on the advisory

Strategic Update: WIOA Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act

Building upon the foundational overview of the context and history of the employment services transformation going back to 1997 that Kim reviewed with the advisory committee at the September 26th meeting, Kim focused the December strategic update specifically upon some of the significant changes to the public vocational rehabilitation program that are being advanced with the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) which was signed into law by President Obama on July 22, 2014 and passed by Congress with wide bipartisan majority: Senate: 93-5; House: 415-6

WIOA makes significant changes to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended and while policy has been enacted, the supporting rulemaking is still in progress.

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Kim outlined the following **key WIOA implementation dates** as follows:

- In general, the Act takes effect on July 1, 2015, unless otherwise noted.
- Title IV amendments to the Rehabilitation Act took effect immediately (July 22, 2014)
- Notices of Proposed Rulemaking must be published by January 18, 2015. There will be a 60 day comment period after the proposed rules are published.
- Final rules must be published by January 22, 2016 (no more than 18 months after enactment)

Key Changes to Title IV Programs include:

1. Increases services to youth with disabilities
2. Supports employer engagement
3. Emphasizes competitive integrated employment
4. Enhances accountability
5. Promotes collaboration and efficiency
6. Transfers NIDRR, IL, and Assistive Technology Act programs to Health and Human Services

Given the fact that WIOA Title IV amendments took effect immediately on July 22, 2014 when the legislation was passed, VRS has been required to immediately dive into the content and begin interpretation and implementation where possible while awaiting the proposed rulemaking and final rules.

Immediate implementation priorities for VRS are focused on WIOA requirements:

1. 90 days from eligibility determination to Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)
 - This shortens the federal requirement from 150 days to 90 days. VRS is already in good position for this change given the work alignment with the rapid engagement and Motivational Interviewing initiatives.
2. Pre-employment transition services
 - Transition programs will require collaboration with the Local Educational Agency (LEA) per the new requirements. Issues include the definition of 'student' and the adjustment of outer age limits covered moving from current 24 years to 21 years per WIOA.
 - Note: LEA's are schools or school districts
3. Changes to supported employment
4. Understanding the potential impact of Section 458: Limitations on Use of Subminimum Wage
5. Communication to staff and stakeholders

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As it relates to Section 413: Eligibility and Individualized Plan for Employment:

- Sec. 413 (b)(4)(F): The IPE shall be developed as soon as possible, but not later than a deadline of 90 days after the date of the determination of eligibility
- Historically, this time frame has been set by the state agency
 - MN General's standard has been 150 days

As it relates to Section 422 (aka 113): Pre-Employment Transition Services:

- In general, the Designated State Unit (DSU) which is DEED VRS for Minnesota, in collaboration with Local Educational Agency (LEA), shall:
 - Provide or arrange pre-employment transition services for all students with disabilities who are *eligible or potentially eligible* for services
 - Students with disabilities are defined as not older than age 21--Sec. 404(37)(A)
- The DSU must reserve not less than 15 percent of its federal award for the provision of pre-employment transition services

Section 422: Required Activities includes requirements around the following:

- Job exploration counseling
- Work-based learning experiences
- Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition services or post-secondary education
- Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living
- Instruction in self-advocacy
 - Note: Kim anticipates that fulfillment of these required activities will entail both VRS and CRPs to deliver. Many VRS Counselors already serve transition youth in 10-12 schools in addition to carrying an adult caseload. Staff capacity is already stretched so there are significant service concerns and staff burnout concerns for the new, increased transition youth service requirements.

As it relates to Subtitle G, Section 461: Employment Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities:

- WIOA amends supported employment provisions of the Rehabilitation Act (Title VI)
- Requires 50% of allotment under this title be reserved for the provision of supported employment services, including extended services, to youth with the most significant disabilities (Section 603)
- Youth with disabilities defined ages 14-24
 - Note: Currently Minnesota's Supported Employment budget is approximately \$320,000. The new requirement will mean that \$160,000 or 50% of that allotment will go to services specifically reserved for youth. This is not a lot of money for services.

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Regarding Availability of Services (Sec. 604):

- 604 (a): Supported Employment Services
 - Funds provided under this title may be used to provide supported employment services to individuals eligible under this title
- 604 (b): Extended Services
 - Funds allotted under this title or Title 1 may be used to provide extended services to youth for a time period not to exceed four years
 - Note: In response to a committee member's question on definitions, Kim shared that 'Supported Employment' is used to support services leading up to, and through stabilization of, employment while 'Extended Services' are used for services after employment stabilization is secure.
 - Note: The VRS Extended Employment allocation is ~\$30Million while the DHS/DTH waivers program is ~\$300Million so the question around dollars following the consumer is an open question that may help address the shortfalls and assist with the interagency policy, regulations and implementation processes to meet WIOA's requirements.

Regarding Section 458 (aka 511): Limitations on the Use of Subminimum Wage

- WIOA prohibits entities holding 14c special wage certificates from paying less than the Federal minimum wage to any individual with a disability age 24 or younger, unless:
 - Individual With Disabilities (IWD) has participated in pre-employment transition services from VR or LEA
 - IWD has applied for VR and been determined ineligible
 - IWD eligible for VR, has an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), and has worked toward employment outcome without success
 - IWD's VR case is closed and they have received career counseling and information and referral (I & R) regarding other resources offering competitive employment services and supports

Regarding Section 458 (b)(2): Contracts

- Local or state educational agencies cannot contract with entities holding a subminimum wage certificate for the purpose of operating a program to employ individuals with disabilities younger than age 24 at wages below minimum wage

Regarding Section 458 (c): During employment

- Entities holding 14c special wage certificate cannot continue to employ individuals with disabilities, regardless of age, at subminimum wage unless VR provides career counseling and information and referral (I & R) that facilitates independent decision making and informed choice
 - Review must be done every 6 months for first year of employment, then annually thereafter

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- Note: This section interacts with the unique Extended Employment program in Minnesota.

Regarding Section 458 (d): Documentation

- The designated state unit (DSU) and state educational agency must develop process that documents completion of informed choice actions
- DSU must provide final documentation to the individual with a disability

Regarding Section 458 (e): Verification

- Employing entity must review documentation that verifies completion of informed choice requirements and maintain copies of that documentation
- Employing entity will be subject to audit by DOL or DSU
 - Note: This section puts VRS and/or DOL in an auditing role to ensure informed choice is occurring as specified.

Regarding Section 458(f): Effective date

- This section takes effect 2 years after the date of enactment of WIOA which will be **July 22, 2016**

In the concluding her WIOA update, Kim provided a recap of the policy objectives of its changes. The policy objectives for WIOA are summarized as follows:

- To reduce the “tracking” of transition aged youth into non-competitive jobs
- To be consistent with the Department of Justice's enforcement of the Supreme Court's Olmstead decision
- To ensure the informed choice process includes consideration of, and experience with, competitive integrated employment via access to VR
- To support the Employment First agenda

As part of WIOA there is a requirement that common performance measures will be established which will entail some work to reconcile the differences that exist today in programs in the Department of Education (DOE) and the Department of Labor (DOL). DOE and DOL is also expected to work together on policy at the federal level.

As part of the working lunch, the advisory asked questions and discussed concerns and ideas related to WIOA as follows:

- Kim: While we have only the policy at this point and with proposed rules being developed, VRS in its role as convener of Minnesota's vocational rehabilitation community is committed to sharing what we know as we continue to learn more and working with our system partners to figure out how we can make the transformations necessary to meet the combined requirements of key legislation affecting the employment services work we all do on behalf of Minnesotans with disabilities. There is a good deal to process and some significant changes that the new laws require of us. However, as leaders and representatives of the community, the CRP Advisory Committee has an important role and opportunity in helping people understand the policy changes and prepare as needed. We acknowledge that many people and

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organizations are understandably nervous and/or fearful about what the changes might mean for their individual situation or organization. We need to help reduce any panic and continue to have open, thoughtful conversations to work through all the legislation to build a path to the future.

- Robert: One of our biggest fears is the understanding and readiness of counties. In our experience many of the counties are unaware of Olmstead and WIOA. With 87 counties, comes 87 different ways to administer the changes to the existing variations.
- Kim: The Department of Human Services is most directly connected with counties and they are a key member of the new Interagency Employment Panel that was required by the Minnesota Olmstead Plan as part of the implementation.
- Robert: While this can be overwhelming, CRPs appreciate the transparency that VRS has provided into all the various legislative and judicial decisions that are creating the accelerated transformation of VR and employment services.
- Laura: Another area of concern for us is the schools and their readiness and capacity to take on the transition youth programs. Like other public organizations, they have been asked to do more and more services without additional resources. And like counties, each school district can have different ways of administering the program services.
- Julie: One idea for our CRP Advisory Committee might be for all of us to work on a set of talking points and key messages that we can take out to those we work with to cascade the information so people are getting good information across the state and feel more empowered rather than feeling fearful/anxious/'in the dark' about what is happening and what is needed.
- Kim: VRS would welcome local connections you all have to help get the word out to other CRPs.
- Laura: I think we have to be careful and thoughtful with messaging. We are probably not the appropriate source to announce these changes to others beyond CRPs. Educators, county staff, parents and advocates should be getting this information from their governing sources.
- Kim: Strategic transforming forces such as WIOA and Olmstead are two examples of why the VRS CRP Advisory Committee is needed. This is the statewide group that VRS looks to for program and policy work affecting the entire system. It's about doing our best work and meeting the letter and the spirit of the changes as they evolve the system. This is hard but important work!
- Jeremy: It's work that's really been started 10 years ago with the Olmstead Decision that is being accelerated by the Department of Justice's increased enforcement. WIOA is just further legislation moving it forward.
- Kim: RSA is currently swamped with figuring out the regulations to support the WIOA policy enacted by Congress. In an effort to meet the new requirements, they have postponed standard work such as federal monitoring visits to the states.
- Tyler: Maybe we should just start with what we have. The WIOA policy is in place but not the rules. How about if we create a 'Frequently Asked Questions about WIOA and Olmstead' piece as a committee that can be used to share accurate, timely updates on

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what we know. I would feel much more comfortable distributing a VRS approved piece than sharing my interpretations of what I understand. The FAQ could be updated along the way and posted on the DEED website.

- Chris: Do we have an opportunity to help shape/influence the regulations and assist RSA in the rulemaking?
- Kim: My understanding from the RSA Commissioner is that once the proposed rules are published for comment there will be a 60 day opportunity to provide input.
- Tyler: Would it be helpful if the CRP Advisory Committee created some type of collaborative impact statement of what we see and our concerns/suggestions for comment shortly after the rules are published?
- Jeremy: My concern is that as CRPs we don't all provide the same services and may have different concerns.
- Laura: What if we all read the proposed rules once they are published and see where we have common input that we can endorse as a committee and leave individual organizations to provide any specific input on their own?
- Holly: The proposed rules are listed to be published January 18th and the next CRP Advisory Committee is scheduled for February 27th. Let's put this on the agenda to see where things are at with the rules and determine next steps after we hopefully have had an initial look at the proposed rules content during the comment period. We'll need to be nimble once they are published to act on something as a committee within the 60 day comment period.
- Next steps were determined and are listed within the session notes on page 3.

- * **Committee member Tyler Foutch of Autism Works provided the December VR community partnership success story**

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DEED Vocational Rehabilitation Services
CRP Advisory Committee 2014 Year in Review

MEETING DATE	PRIORITY TOPIC	KEY DELIVERABLES
JANUARY 24 TH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ LAUNCH! ○ DHS RULE 11 BACKGROUND CHECKS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. WELCOME NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS II. REVIEW 2013 CRP ADVISORY TEAM CHARTER FOR UPDATES III. DISCUSS DHS RULE 11 BACKGROUND CHECKS
MARCH 28 TH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ FINALIZE 2014 CHARTER ○ VR COMMUNITY OUTREACH & COMMUNICATION ○ MINNESOTA OLMSTEAD PLAN AND VRS PURCHASED SERVICES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. COMPLETE UPDATES FOR 2014 CRP ADVISORY TEAM CHARTER II. DISCUSSION ON VR COMMUNITY OUTREACH CHALLENGES III. DISCUSSION ON THE MN OLMSTEAD PLAN'S DIRECTIVES ON INTEGRATED SETTINGS AND THE MANDATE'S IMPLICATIONS FOR SERVICES PURCHASED BY VRS
APRIL 25 TH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DISCOVERY PROCESS ONE YEAR CHECK-IN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. OVERVIEW OF VRS QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE EXPERIENCE WITH DISCOVERY PROCESS II. DISCUSSION ON CRP EXPERIENCES WITH DISCOVERY PROCESS III. OVERALL OBSERVATIONS AND POTENTIAL NEXT STEPS
JUNE 27 TH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ UPDATES ON MINNESOTA OLMSTEAD PLAN DIRECTIVES FOR VRS PURCHASED SERVICES ○ CRPS PERSPECTIVES ON DEAF / HARD OF HEARING INTERPRETER SERVICES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. DISCUSSION ON DRAFT LANGUAGE AND CONTRACT CHANGES ASSOCIATED WITH VRS PURCHASED SERVICES SPECIFIC TO INTEGRATED SETTINGS II. DISCUSSION ON STATEWIDE CRP PARTNER EXPERIENCES WITH INTERPRETER SERVICES FOR VR CONSUMERS
SEPTEMBER 26 TH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ UPDATES ON MN OLMSTEAD PLAN IMPLEMENTATION ○ WORKFORCE INNOVATION & OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. DISCUSSION REGARDING HOW OLMSTEAD WILL IMPACT MINNESOTA'S VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES II. DISCUSSION ON CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES FOR SERVING PEOPLE WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES WITHIN THE MANDATES OF COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT AND INTEGRATED SETTINGS
OCTOBER 24 TH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CANCELLED - SCHEDULE ISSUES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. N/A
DECEMBER 5 TH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ WORKFORCE INNOVATION & OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA) ○ VR COMMUNITY BUILDING IN MINNESOTA ○ 2014 REVIEW / 2015 PLANNING 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF WIOA'S REGULATIONS IMPACTING EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND COMMUNITY INTEGRATION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES II. REVIEW OF FOURTH FULL YEAR OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE WORK AND ADVISORY IDEAS FOR GREATER VR COMMUNITY BUILDING IN MINNESOTA III. IDENTIFY INITIAL LIST OF ADVISORY TOPICS FOR 2015

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VRS CRP Advisory Committee: 2014 in Review

The facilitator reviewed the CRP Advisory Committee's slate of topics and deliverables from the six sessions in 2014 - a summary of which is provided on the previous page. Next she facilitated input on the pre-assignment questions. The responses are summarized below.

Reflecting over the past year of the VRS CRP Advisory Committee:

a. What have you valued most about our time together?

- This committee really does make a difference; this committee helps to make the changes that will serve to improve the work we do together... thank you for the opportunity to serve
- I appreciate that the entire state is represented at the table, as a member completing their term, I will really miss it, I take a lot of notes and share them as soon as I get back. It's been great to meet a lot of the names and being able to connect them with faces, and creating personal working relationships
- I value all the communication - there is so much going both ways
- I appreciated the break outs on DISCOVERY... others in my organization are participating in the small group that was spurred from this group
- I value having direct contact with VRS leaders
- It's a real opportunity to influence how laws are implemented in our state
- We are all talking about important, shared VR topics. I appreciate being at the table - it's empowering to have the level of trust and collaboration we've developed. I also appreciate the safe environment we have that allows us to have dissent and listen to each other with respect - it says a lot about the quality of this group of people and their commitment to our shared purpose and community
- It helps me with understanding the language issues and translations of what we all deal with day to day in our respective worlds
- I appreciate the topics that we've discussed... when we look back at the year... wow, we tackled some really big, complicated topics... I always take it back and digest it in our agencies... I take the info, feedback and input back to our organizations. It helps us anticipate what we need to do and how the changes impact each other since we have other partners. Having that greater community awareness is really helpful
- I appreciated the topic on deaf and hard of hearing... being in this group, I hear about things and it helps us prepare and respond to all the changes in our world
- I value the statewide/across the state perspectives and having the ability to be honest and dig into the tough issues together
- Being from the Northeast part of the state, we're a different player from those around us however the philosophy we have is very similar to this committee - it helps to be with others who have similar values to get recharged. We're a young, small organization and

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it's great to be around others who have been around longer and are the experienced 'behemoths' to learn from... I value that through our committee I have a network of people I can now call that I really appreciate, my thanks to everyone

- I appreciate the opportunities to meet and interact with people through this committee that I might not have had an opportunity to meet otherwise

b. What have the important benefits and results of our work together?

- We discuss a wide variety of strategic topics - I learn a lot about other CRPs and organizations and how and what they do with their work. We all have similar values and it's refreshing to get together. Collaboration was pretty individualized before the formation of this group by VRS. I have learned and enjoyed a great deal from the folks around the table.
- I've learned a lot about the legislative process. It's helped us move from wondering what they were going to 'do to us', to understanding how we can get involved and help shape it... thanks for the opportunity to be part of this work.
- The new day services cooperative organized by Dan & Robert was triggered by the community success story from Jeremy... ideas generated here live and grow into other organizations cascading into the state.
- In the same spirit of collaboration this committee has created, we have brought our quality assurance people together to share best practices e.g. 245D, we're taking complicated rules and figuring out how to make them work.
- I appreciate that we have a VRS leader who is not only open to, but encourages the conversation across the community... this group has increased the understanding of what is going on in our individual worlds as well as our combined community... the VR community is so different in the past few years - our ability to work together has increased exponentially.
- I appreciate all the different perspectives... I know I can ask questions and take helpful information and examples back to my staff and they feel more connected to the community; we are changing the perspectives from competitive to collaborative.
- Information sharing helps everyone feel more empowered to deal with and plan for whatever occurs, it helps us with creating a more positive future... This happens because of Kim's leadership. She is willing to convene and listen to all the opinions around the table.
- As the VRS State Director, the CRP Advisory Committee is immensely helpful to me, we can only do this work in partnership. Our agency could isolate ourselves and make decisions oblivious to impacts to others however we all have a shared interest so why wouldn't we put our heads together and share the work to do more good together. I appreciate that this committee is less about the legislative/political agenda and more about how do we get the work done. I prefer to be in conversations where the conversation is being driven by mission. While we must deal with the realities of the political, the conversations we have here are 'meaty' conversations. It is good to have this group.

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- It's great to have the opportunity to see the community commit to 'building what's next in the VR community'... I'm very excited about helping to bring about the future. My hope is that we can bring everyone in our community along and together into the greater sense of community. How do we intentionally bring the rest of the community into the conversation? How do we work and share and make it work for our consumers? This committee's work has been good - it can be even better as we combine our thoughts and work in the future.

VRS CRP Advisory Committee: Building the Greater Community in 2015

Next the committee shifted gears to discuss their ideas for building even greater community across the state for all those who share the mission. Here are the responses to the remainder of the pre-assignment questions that focused on the future:

c. *What should we focus on going forward into 2015?*

- **DHS and counties and schools...** gain key perspectives and exchange with some of the other critical partners also involved in the changes we're discussing e.g tap member's connections to identify potential guest subject matter experts
- **informed choice...** key place to revisit... we need to learn more how are those decisions are being made and how can we help consumers get the best information and experience
- **terminology and definitions...** this is an opportunity with all the changes - to look at and create consistency where we can in our language and definitions. Verbiage is really important e.g. our placement people can be doing the same thing and calling it something different. Perhaps we could make this the work of a work group to include potential items such as how purchased services are listed, revisiting the language and expectations of the fundamentals. We used to have the PBA 'redbook'. Look at definitions for more 'established' words like triggers and stabilization. Infuse with innovations and redefining work from major initiatives such as Next Generation Placement so we can defuse and accelerate into the whole state.
- **contracts...** how do we make, gain input and communicate contract changes. use opportunities to convene and make effective changes. can we create a more collaborative approach for making changes. increase our being on 'the same page', consistency, language, make it easier to do it right/correctly for everyone's benefit
- **quality measures on services...** consumers, providers, VRS... how do we understand how we're doing and identify opportunities for improvement and transformation

d. *How can we do a better job of sharing the work of this committee with the greater vocational rehabilitation community?*

- **communication tools....** this group can help analyze the tools, help push things out
- **consider issue focused work groups/spinoff groups...** as we're moving forward; if there is a need to get into the 'nitty gritty' of a particular topic then perhaps we create a smaller group e.g. Deaf/Hard of Hearing subcommittee was generated after a strategic topic discussed here at the advisory; it's a way for other CRP professionals who applied

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for the committee to get involved in the work and extend the number of people involved throughout the system

- **distribute the approved session notes** to committee alumni to keep past members looped into the ongoing work in addition to posting notes on the website:

- i. add all former members to the current CRP Advisory distribution list

e. How can the CRP Advisory Committee membership help to...

- **create and communicate a shared vision for the greater VR community in Minnesota in response to the system changes being driven by the Olmstead Plan and by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)?**
 - *Develop a WIOA Policy FAQ and help disseminate with intention and consistency*
 - *Review of the proposed regulations for potential of a collaborative impact response during the 60 day comment period*
 - *Need more trainers from providers for Placement 101... we need to recruit more people, must be a steady flow... keep it alive within our community... it was a lot of work to create - and it's a lot of work to sustain it now that we have it up and running. we can help lead that*
 - *contracts... work together as changes are made, assist with rationale on changes and why decisions are made; patterns and process*
- **engage other partners and key stakeholders in sharing the work and shaping our future together?**
 - *like to see the **regional community partners meetings** reinvigorated... not monthly; perhaps quarterly or twice a year... bring back a regional forum to share what's happening...*
 - *can help get the word out on CRP Advisory work and notes to other community partners*
 - *potentially invite the local leaders from key partner organizations e.g. schools, counties, etc.*
 - *consistent with VRS Value Proposition role of convener of the community*
 - *have local CRPs partner with VRS to create and host the regional community partners meetings. CRP members of this advisory should be involved in their respective regional meetings.*
 - *facilitate regional networking, content/information sharing and discussion*

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Vocational Rehabilitation Community Topics

❖ CRP updates:

- Dan Meyers
 - **Opportunity Partners** was pleased to be given CARF's 'exemplary' rating.
 - They are working on a number of things including certified learning platforms.
- Julie Peterschick
 - **Productive Alternatives** had its first IPS Fidelity review. Very intensive review of all your services including program and fiscal reconciliation.
 - They have asked a committee to create a PD and hire an agency trainer for 245D and other training needs. The position will also be responsible for creating a core training.
- Tyler Foutch
 - **Autism Works** has received a MnSCU grant to launch DISCOVERY.
 - A program manager is relocating to CA so they will be hiring a new program manager
 - November was a big month for referrals... people coming off the 950+ waiting list with use of re-allotment dollars
- Robert Reedy
 - **RISE, Incorporated** have finished their sixth Fidelity review.
 - They received a grant from St Stephens and Hennepin Health (comprised of Medicaid and Catholic Charities) designed to provide wrap around service for folks leaving adult correctional facilities.
- Amanda Jensen-Stahl
 - **Goodwill Easter Seals** has been shifting some managers around in response to staffing needs. They are expanding youth transition services aligned with retail.
 - Andrea West is manager of EDS/Transitional Employment.
 - A number of facilities changes: The Fairview retail store is moving closer to Lifetrack on University. Outlet located off 280. Shifting warehouse distribution to Brooklyn Park. Opening up some work experience and employment opportunities in all three. slated for early 2015.
 - Business manager James Houston is working with placement partnerships to help develop employer relationships and grow it across the metro potentially in MPP. With the economy rebounding, some employers are 'desperate' for new sources of good employees and Goodwill Easter Seals is looking to tap into that opportunity to connect more jobseekers to employment.

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- Josh Howie
 - **Trillium Works** is moving into new offices. With an already super low unemployment rate, the Duluth market/economy is continuing to improve. We are also growing our services in the surrounding area.
- Heather Deutschlaender -
 - **ProAct Inc.** - Excited for a consumer we worked with for three years who was injured with TBI, got her settled into a job and has now 'arrived', complete with a new car, in a much better place. ProAct shared her story as part of their legislative awards ceremony.
 - Partnering with MRC to access the east metro area - being hosted at their computer lab.

❖ DEED/VRS updates:

- Jan Thompson, VRS Field Director
 - All 954 people came off the waiting list. On September 5th, the first 300 came off with the remainder coming off on Nov 24th thanks to the re-allotment dollars we received and dedicated to helping move people off the waiting list. Unfortunately after utilizing the one-time dollars, VRS had to re-close categories #2-3.
- Jay Hancock, South & Central Regional Manager
 - A little over a year ago, VRS and local partners worked with employer Kwik Trip to fill retail helper positions. It's been a wonderful success! The positions were developed with Monday thru Friday hours such that available public transportation could be used to get hires to and from work. Two VRS staff have helped 50 people get jobs and only 4 have not worked out.
 - Kwik Trip is opening 11 stores in Duluth and Superior and we are optimistic there will be more job opportunities given their positive experience in the Mankato area.
 - The successful partnership with Kwik Trip is being written up by John Fisher. They have said they are willing to testify as an employer on behalf of VR services at the legislature. VRS has relied on partners for the placement services. Kwik Trip has raved about 'Our best workers. They show up!'
 - Jay also said it appears there will be opportunities for advancement in the organization for those hired into the retail helper positions.

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Important Messages for the Greater Vocational Rehabilitation Community:

- WIOA will require some significant changes. VRS in its role as convener of Minnesota's vocational rehabilitation community is committed to sharing what we know as we continue to learn more and working with our system partners to figure out how we can make the transformations necessary to meet the combined requirements of key legislation affecting the employment services work we all do on behalf of Minnesotans with disabilities.
- As leaders and representatives of the greater VR community, the CRP Advisory Committee has an important role and opportunity in helping people understand the policy changes and prepare as needed. We know that many people and organizations are understandably nervous and/or fearful about what the changes might mean for them. We need to help reduce any panic and continue to engage in open, thoughtful conversations to work through all the legislation to build a path to the future.
- Reflecting on the fourth year as a committee, we are appreciative of the collaborative relationships and resulting conversations and work we have accomplished together. We have lively, open, and respectful dialogue on a wide range of strategic topics affecting vocational rehabilitation services in Minnesota. We have shared values and goals for serving Minnesotans with disabilities to the best of our abilities individually and collectively across the entire state.
- Looking toward 2015, we are committed to continuing to work together on the policies and program topics we have covered in the past such as the Olmstead Plan, Informed Choice and WIOA as well as dig into additional areas of strategic importance such as service quality measures and connections to additional key system partners including counties, schools and other impacted state agencies such as DHS.